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LIFE



A FAMILY TRADITION, 4 | HOLIDAY LIFE, 27 | SLICE OF LIFE, 47

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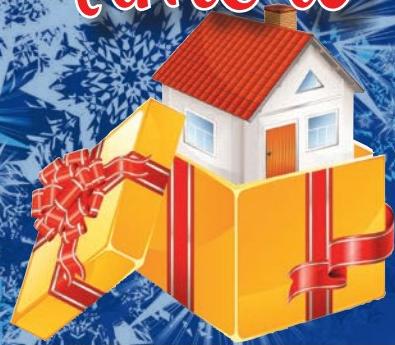
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- Cheryl DePrest

See story page 16

ON THE COVER

A pastel work by Beverly Schirmeier of the Wethersfield Arts Academy.

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photos by Mark Jahne

A family tradition

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Anderson Farms on the Broad Street Green in Old Wethersfield has been selling fresh fruits and vegetables since 1854, six years before the first shot was fired to launch the Civil War.

Scottish immigrant James R. Anderson was the first in a long line of family members to own and operate the farm. Today, his descendant David Anderson, 79, is the proprietor, assisted by nephews Craig and Chris Anderson, who at some point will become the next generation to own the land and business.

They are the sons of David's late brother Jim. He is pleased that they want to carry on the tradition.

This past summer, the Connecticut Agricultural Information Council presented Anderson Farms with its Century Farm Award in honor of more than 100 years in business.

Red onions, tobacco and dairy were the first products. James R. Anderson built a Victorian home on the green that still stands today, and eventually his son, James Welles

Anderson, took over the farm.

David Anderson has run the farm for 55 years. Today's Anderson Farms still has its retail sales operation along the street. It sells wholesale to the Hartford Regional Market and direct sale to other farm stands.

According to CAIC, Anderson was one of the first farms in the state to employ integrated pest management practices.

David Anderson is a member of the Hartford County Farm Bureau, Connecticut Farm Bureau, Greater Hartford Farmers Market and Connecticut Vegetables Growers Association.

Relaxing in his sitting room, he recently spoke about the farm and how the property originally belonged to his great-grandmother Hanna Wells. A calendar open to October 1959 hangs on the wall.

"I took over from my dad on April 2, 1960," he said. "When I took over, it was J.W. Anderson & Sons. The retail end has been Anderson Farms."

He recalled working on the farm during his junior high and high

school days. The size of the farm grew over the years and includes parcels on Elm Street, Broad Street and in the Great Meadows, the last one by far the largest.

The Meadows parcel has a pond that is used for irrigation when needed. Additional land is rented for planting as well.

"Right now, we own about 135 acres," he said.

His grandfather, born in New Orleans, came back to the family business in 1852, originally growing tobacco and running a small dairy operation.

"They had a fire and lost the tobacco barn," Anderson said.

Then, the family got out of the dairy businesses because of a tuberculosis outbreak. Even though its cows were healthy, his father didn't want to take any chances.

The focus changed to supplying wholesale produce to the nearby Connecticut State Prison cannery on State Street.

Vegetables have been part of the farm's product line since the 1930s. Anderson added four green-

Anderson Farms keeps producing tasty fruits and vegetables

houses after he took ownership. He gets those up and running each February with flowers and early seasonal veggies.

"Our biggest acreage is sweet corn," he said.

Other products include spinach, beets, radishes, squash, peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, lettuce and pumpkins. He said spinach and beets, in particular, are well suited to grow in New England.

Anderson knows exactly how many days it takes for each type of vegetable and flower to reach maturity. Planting periods overlap so he does not run out of a product.

Successful farmers also need to know how to deal with such uncontrollable factors as wet spells, dry spells and extreme summer heat, he added. They need to be in tune with what their customers want, too.

"You have to change with what the market's looking for," he said. "We try to raise some of the best varieties."

Anderson hires Jamaican migrant workers to help in the fields, something he has done since 1987.



Anderson Farms still uses several classic trucks to transport its produce. The oldest is this 1934 Ford V-8 that still runs.

Although farming is more mechanized now than it was 100 years ago, a portion of the work is still done by hand.

"This year, by far, was not an easy growing season. We had a terribly cold April. ... We were short of stuff all the time," he said.

Another change he has seen is improved science that resulted in better fertilizers and mixers

for healthier and more robust, or "super enhanced" crops, as he called them.

Anderson is well versed in the practice of growing by degree-days and has enjoyed a long collaboration with the University of Connecticut Agricultural Extension Center.

One result of this knowledge is the corn he grows today is of a higher quality and better texture. It also enjoys a longer shelf life. Anderson Farms grows three kinds of corn: white, yellow and the butter-and-sugar variety.

Anderson Farms has a variety of trucks that date from the 1940s and 1950s that he still uses. There's a 1934 Ford V-8 truck in the garage that is not employed on the farm anymore, but still runs. All of them are stored in sheds and barns behind his home.

"I've never lived in any other house than this one," he said.

For decades, people have been able to drive up to the front of his home to buy fresh produce off the stand there. He also sells to other retailers and farm stands.

"We did another retail site in Clinton for 19

years on Route 1. We did very well there. We do some delivery, but not as much as we used to," he said.

"At one time there were probably 15 or more farms [in Wethersfield]. Now quite a few have been developed [as housing]," he added. "It's very expensive to get into this business. We can operate from our own property if we have to."

Another challenge to life as a farmer is the long hours. A typical workday is 16 hours, running from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"I haven't had a day off since back in March. I'm used to it," he said.

Nephew Craig Anderson said he is impressed with the work ethic, attention to detail and dedication to the business shown every day by his uncle. He added that David is a hands-on leader and still operates much of the farm equipment himself.

"He doesn't sit still. If we told Dave he had to retire tomorrow, it would kill him," Craig said.

He added that despite the fact his uncle will turn 80 on his next birthday, the man takes no medications. Maybe it's all that hard work and time spent outdoors. **WL**

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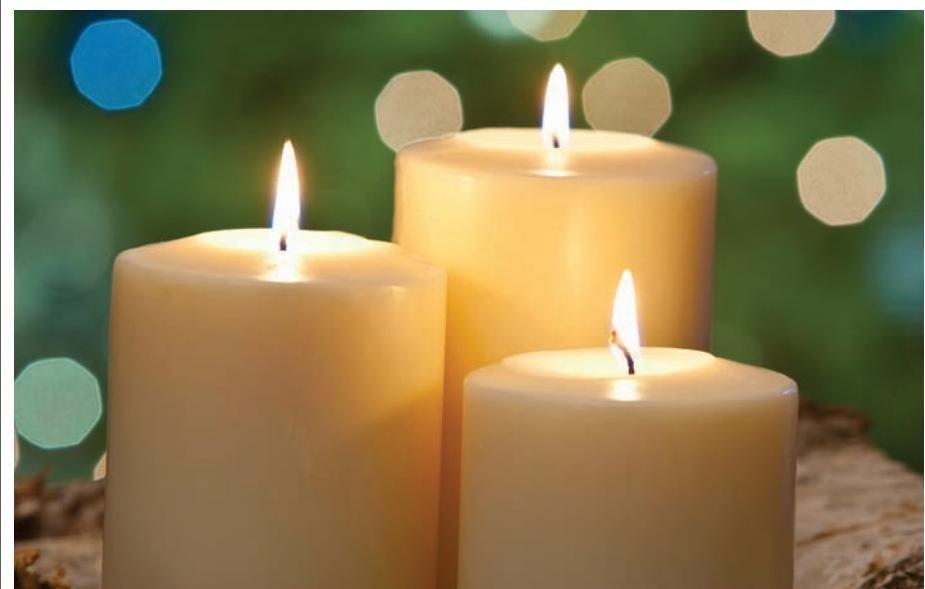


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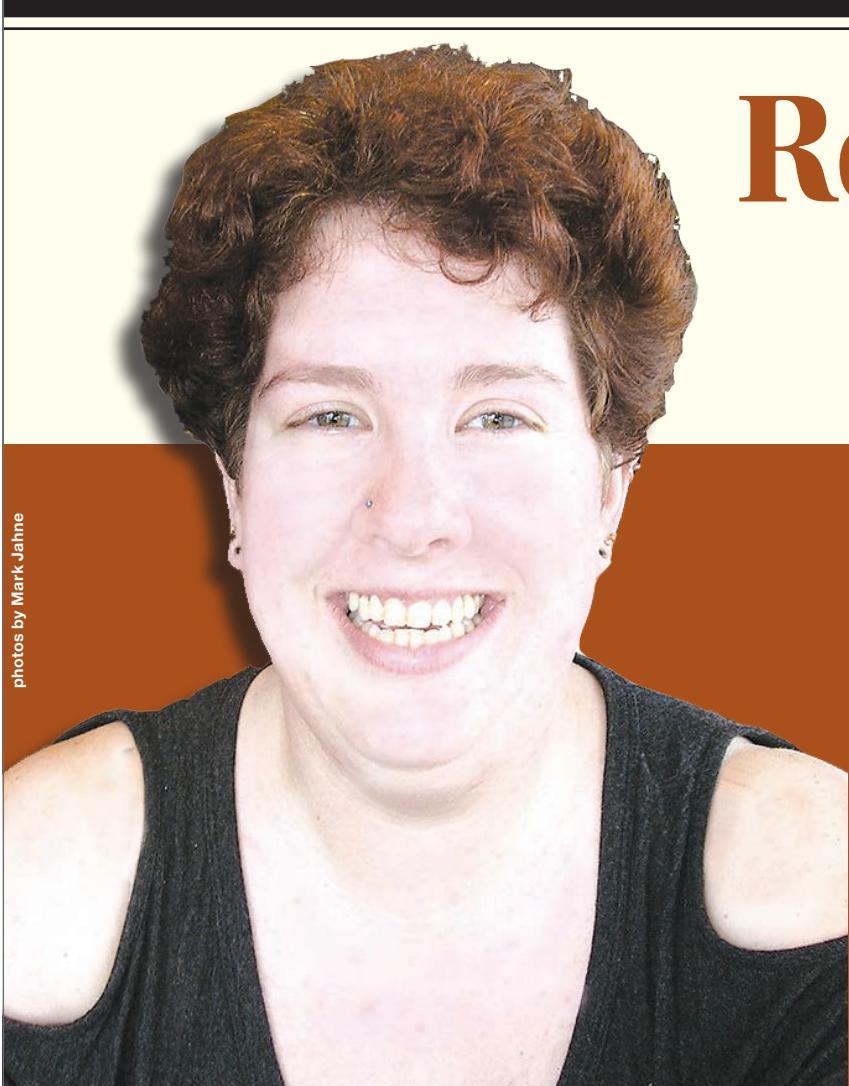
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photos by Mark Jahne

Ready to serve

Volunteers give their time to
Capitol Region Medical Reserve Corps

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Most people in town probably don't know that the Capitol Region Medical Reserve Corps exists, but they can rest assured that it does and that the volunteers who make up this organization are ready to respond on short notice to help in times of need.

The CR-MRC consists of volunteer medical and public health professionals, as well as non-medical support staff. Their skills and expertise can be called upon for community events, as well as in emergencies or other times of need.

They function as part of local emergency preparedness teams to supplement existing public safety and public health resources. The corps is struc-

tured, trained and equipped to deploy a medical emergency response team to manage the health consequences of an incident during its first 48 to 96 hours.

These volunteers also assist at local public health initiatives such as immunization clinics and prevention activities. They can be assigned to provide medical services at emergency shelters following a storm or any other major incident.

The Medical Reserve Corps program is a nationwide initiative. Katherine McCormack is the director of the CR-MRC. She previously served as health director for the city of Hartford and is an adjunct faculty member at the University of New Haven. She is a nurse and has a degree in public health.

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Members of the Medical Reserve Corps volunteer their time at a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War at Bradley International Airport.

She explained that this unit is somewhat different from most other MRCs around the country because it is not connected to a public health district, but rather to the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

"The MRC mission is dedicated to establishing a team of local medical and public health professionals," she said. "We have somewhere between 200 and 250 on the roster."

They participate in drills to prepare for such things as storms and ebola and anthrax incidents. The MRC is primarily intended for activation during a major emergency.

It can mobilize in full or in part, depending upon the specific need. McCormack said her organization receives a great deal of logistical support from the Governor's Horse Guard and Governor's Foot Guard.

She has at her disposal a mobile field office and 55-bed mobile hospital.

Professions involved in this effort include physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians, emergency medical technicians and mental health workers.

One such volunteer is Sarah Swiatek of Rocky Hill. She has been a pharmacist since 2001 and has managed the pharmacy inside the ShopRite supermarket in Waterbury for the past dozen years.

"I graduated from UConn's first doctor of pharmacy class," she said. "I opened an email one day and there was a little piece of information [about the MRC]. I enjoy volunteering."

Swiatek was also interested in meeting other health care professionals, so she contacted the organization and signed up. She likened it to the military reserves.

"I've been a member for just a little over a year," she said. "I wanted to join this because I don't get a lot of hands-on time with my patients."

She's also been the pharmacy

lead for the past five years for the Connecticut Mission of Mercy, which is part of the Connecticut Foundation for Dental Outreach. It conducts a twice-yearly clinic.

Swiatek helped out at a flu clinic in East Lyme through the MRC. She explained that pharmacists are allowed to inoculate adults with all current vaccines.

"[The MRC] is for any kind of wartime response, natural disasters, sheltering for floods or hurricanes, anything like that. This was created shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, by President [George W.] Bush," she said. "We're learning skills in case, God forbid, there's an emergency situation."

Training is ongoing. One of the sessions she attended was on pediatric disaster response. Several MRC volunteers provided first aid and triage services in July at a 50th anniversary commemoration of the Vietnam War held at Bradley International Airport. The team was assigned to assist the Air National Guard that day.

"It was a great experience for me

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because I'm new to this," Swiatek said.

She already has her Pharm D. degree and is currently studying for a master's degree in medication therapy management through the University of Florida.

"Once my master's is done, I intend to become more involved," she said.

Courtney Cudmore of Wethersfield is another CR-MRC volunteer. She is a certified emergency medical technician who works in a group home for special needs adults and serves as a duty officer with the Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance Association.

"When I was 21, I wanted to be on the federal disaster response team," she said.

Cudmore enjoys traveling and helping people. The Wethersfield High School graduate was not selected for that federal program, but a friend told her about the Medical Reserve Corps and she decided to check it out.

"I have been a member for about four years. I have done a lot of training with them," she said. "I've been



Sarah Swiatek of Rocky Hill is a pharmacist.

lucky that we haven't needed to do it yet."

She wants to test her skills under the pressure of an emergency situation but, as with the ambulance service, she is well aware that something bad has to happen for such an opportunity to arise.

"I'm ready for it. The rest of the MRC is, too," she said.

She works weekends, and that sometimes limits her ability to attend events and training sessions.



The Capitol Region Medical Reserve Corps has a 55-bed mobile field hospital at its disposal.

Courtesy photos

Cudmore helped out in the town's emergency shelter at the Pitkin Community Center when electrical power was out for more than a week following a freak late October snowstorm four years ago.

"I was on the ambulance for that snowstorm. It was crazy," she recalled.

She said the MRC is made up of a very diverse group of people.

"It's really awesome to sit in a room together," she said.

"I really like to serve my community in any way I can. I really fell into health care and volunteering. I love it," Cudmore said. "The reason why I volunteer is because it's neighbors helping neighbors." **WL**

Anyone interested in joining the CR-MRC is encouraged to visit getreadycapitolregion.org. Questions may be referred to Katherine McCormack at kmcarr4040@aol.com.

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LIFE back then

She may be dressed for a night on the town, but Jenson's heart was never far from her love of aviation.

Mary Goodrich Jenson was known as the 'girl pilot'

by Rachel Zilinski
Wethersfield Historical Society

Mary Goodrich Jenson was a woman who broke gender barriers and made no apologies for her opinions. A long-time resident of Wethersfield, she was not afraid to pursue her dreams, regardless of how inappropriate they may have been considered at the time.

Nothing would stop this tenacious woman who lived well into her 96th year. This story does not capture every aspect of her extensive life adventure, but instead views Jenson as a pioneer, as a woman, and to many, as a friend.

Her independence and love of literature began young, fostered by her grandfather Elizur Stillman Goodrich, who ran the Hartford-New York

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Steamboat Co. and Hartford-Wethersfield Horse Railway. Jenson had her mind set on becoming a journalist and approached the Hartford Courant's editor for a job.

In conversation with the editor, she mentioned that she was taking flying lessons. The editor offered her a position as a reporter if she could obtain her pilot's license before a woman employed by the rival Hartford Times did so.

In 1929, at age 20, Jenson became a pilot (license 9140) and a journalist, reporting on all things aviation.

As one of the first few female aviators, she was a charter member of the Ninety-Nines, an organization for women pilots whose members included Amelia Earhart. She attended the first meeting on Nov. 2, 1929, when the organization was established.

At the age of 21 she was able to buy her own plane, a Fairchild KR-21 single engine biplane costing \$2,400. Jenson flew that plane while competing in air shows either racing or "bomb throwing," dropping bags of flour at targets on the ground.

She often flew over town and would yell, "I'll be home for dinner soon" to her parents. Betty Arnold, a friend and neighbor, remembers saying when a plane was flying low over the houses, "There goes Mary Goodrich."

By 1933, Jenson's aviation achievements included the first solo female flight to Cuba. Unfortunately, her license was not renewed due to vision issues and her flying days were over, but her adventure had only just begun.

She flew on the Hindenburg on one of its last flights in July 1936, traveled to Virginia to work on the Homestead (a historical and leisure destination), and aided in coordinating the Texas bicentennial celebration.

In her travels she arrived at California and fell into a position at Disney Studios. Mary met Walt Disney a few times, aided in developing the story research department, and worked intimately on the classic animated film "Dumbo."

She met her husband Carl Jenson while in California and they married in 1940. Moving home in 1942 did not bring a calmer life, as World War II disrupted the world.

Carl served in the armed forces



photos courtesy of the Wethersfield Historical Society

Mary Goodrich Jenson was a pioneering female pilot in the late 1920s.

while Mary aided from the home front. Shortly after the war they became the parents of two children, Bill in 1947 and Ann in 1948. Mary, Carl, Bill, Ann, her niece Mary and Mary's ailing mother, Ella Reed Goodrich, lived together at 212 Jordan Lane.

Mary Jenson was an active resident and lent her talents to many community organizations. She was the director of the Betsy Ross Corps, a national defense group of women pilots, served on the Board of Education, Republican Town Committee, Council of Social Agencies of Greater Hartford, associated with the Connecticut Historical Society and the Wadsworth Atheneum.

She was a member and strong supporter of the Wethersfield Historical Society and was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame in 2000.

Over the years, Mary Jenson saw the importance of her family and her place within local history and donated many objects to the Wethersfield Historical Society that enhance our understanding of the past.

Notable objects include a magnificent 18th century Wethersfield highboy, Hanmer family china, countless early 20th century textiles and more. She died in 2004 and her family established a memorial fund in her honor at the society that continues her tradition of service to the community. **WL**

Rachel Zilinski is the former curator of the Wethersfield Historical Society.



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Putnam Bridge work is done

Connections for new walkway are still up in the air

by Nancy Thompson
LIFE Staff

The construction crews, heavy machinery, State Police cars and barriers are, for the most part, gone. Traffic is moving freely. The \$30-million plus Putnam Bridge rehabilitation project is for all purposes done, including a new pedestrian walkway along the down-river side of the span.

At the moment, it's a path that's inaccessible and goes nowhere, but officials at the state Department of Transportation and bicycle and fitness advocates throughout the area hope that will change before long.

Jennifer Carrier, a professional engineer and director of transportation planning for the state, said the state and the Capital Region Council of Governments are working together on the project.

"Project funding and schedules have yet to be identified," she said, adding the regional council and the transportation department are working with municipal stakeholders.

She said the regional group recently corresponded with the state about potential funding and prioritization for the completion of the connecting multi-use paths in both Glastonbury and Wethersfield.

"The region expects to continue discussions ... and are hopeful that this project can be initiated soon," Carrier added.

Glastonbury bicycling advocate Deb Dauphinais has been hoping to see the project become a reality for several years.

An increasing number of people are choosing bicycling as a healthy

and environmentally friendly transportation alternative and as a form of exercise and recreation," she said.

"State and local advocates have been working on this bridge access for over a decade and we are excited to see it come to fruition over the next couple of years. We are grateful that the state took the opportunity to install the center portion during this phase of the bridgework, and are hopeful that regional, state and federal funding will be forthcoming to complete the project."

While some have asked why the walkway was constructed before it went anywhere, Dauphinais, who owns Bicycles East with her husband, Steve, said that was the best way to do it.

"It was always the plan to create the walkway before the approaches

"In our pursuit of smarter, more efficient and cleaner transportation options, these types of pedestrian- and bike-friendly paths become critical to meeting our overall goal of finding alternatives to driving."

- Gov. Dannel Malloy

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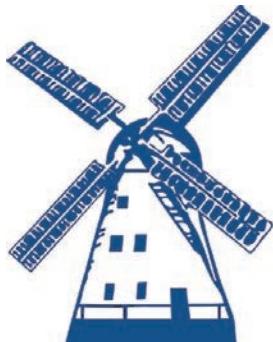
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were even close to being ready. This only made sense because the DOT was working on the bridge at the time and it was the most appropriate and economical time to do the addition," she said.

"We knew that it would be a few years to go through design, funding, wetlands issues, etc. The state is looking for sources of regional, state and federal funding. This is a regional/state transportation project and it is not expected that the bill will be paid by Glastonbury and Wethersfield taxpayers."

She also clarified the intended use for the new walkway on the bridge.

"There is also confusion about the use. It is a pedestrian walkway. That is because there are strict regulations about width and so on that determine when you can call something a bikeway," she said.

"The structure of the Putnam Bridge limited the width that the cantilever could hold. This is true of other bridges in the state. Technically, you are supposed to dismount the bike."

She added the approaches will be designed to accommodate bicycles as well as people on foot.

The six-foot-wide walkway can be seen along the side of the bridge, which carries Route 3 across the Connecticut River.

The decision to include the walkway in the rehabilitation proj-

ect was reached in 2011 after several meetings with local and regional officials and organizations, Goodwin College, and bicycle and pedestrian advocates who had been hoping for a path across the bridge for many years.

The walkway added about \$5 million to the \$26 million project.

At the time the pedestrian path was announced, Gov. Dannel Malloy called it "an important way to integrate multimodal transportation into our existing infrastructure. In our pursuit of smarter, more efficient, and cleaner transportation options, these types of pedestrian-and bike-friendly paths become critical to meeting our overall goal of finding alternatives to driving. As we partner with communities and other stakeholders, we hear a real commitment to making these options happen."

Goodwin College in East Hartford owns hundreds of acres along the river in East Hartford, Wethersfield and Glastonbury and has said it would like to have connections to and from the bridge to accommodate a trail network it is planning.

As part of the announcement that the walkway would happen, Transportation Commissioner James Redeker said his department is committed to working with regional and local agencies and other interested parties.

"This is a great step forward in allowing access across the

Facts about the Putnam Bridge

- The William Putnam Memorial Bridge was built in 1959.
- William H. Putnam was a Hartford businessman and chairman of the Greater Hartford Bridge Authority in the late 1950s. He died nine months before the bridge opened.
- The bridge was to have been known as the Wethersfield-Glastonbury Bridge but was named after Putnam upon his death.
- Originally, the Putnam Bridge was to have been part of I-491 with two decks, each carrying four lanes of traffic. The existing bridge was designed to be the northbound four lanes of the bridge. Plans for the second span were scrapped after the southeastern segment of I-491, from Wethersfield to East Hartford, was cancelled.
- Connections to the bridge to and from I-91 and state Route 2 also were cancelled early on, but were built in the late 1980s and mid-1990s.
- The bridge underwent rehabilitation work in 1987, emergency deck repairs in 2007, deck patching and other work in 2008 and emergency steel repairs in 2009. The most recent repairs, considered to be a major rehabilitation project, started in 2013 and were finished this past summer.
- The 14-span, two-girder steel frame structure is 2,400 feet long.
- An average of 54,200 vehicles cross the bridge daily, according to 2010 data.



Signs mark the fact that the Putnam Bridge now offers a walking trail and bicycle path.

Connecticut River in this area of the state. The only other connections for bicyclists and pedestrians are located in Hartford or Middletown," Redeker said.

"This kind of quality of life

action benefits everyone and illustrates our commitment to promoting every mode of transportation. It also demonstrates the importance of partnering with stakeholders at every level." WL



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Photo by Mara Dresner

Cheryl DePrest cuts large blocks of soap in her kitchen for use in her Olga Bobbi line.

'Be good to your skin every day'

Olga Bobbi line of soaps is named for founder's mother-in-law

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

When Cheryl DePrest's daughter Shannon was a baby, she had eczema. Doctors prescribed a steroid cream, but DePrest was reluctant to put that on her child's skin.

"I started reading up on different oils and herbs and thought I could make something. I started making some soap. It takes a while. It takes six to eight weeks to cure and then I started noticing it getting better and I thought, 'This is pretty cool.' Then it was gone, and I thought I was on to something," she said.

"Back then, there were really limited products on the market."

DePrest said it was a lot of trial and error.

"It was all about experimentation. I had learned from a friend in town how to make soap. She was

using Crisco shortening in her soap," she said.

"I was looking into all the different oils. I only use vegetable oils. I don't use animal oils, I don't use lard or anything like that."

Now she has launched a line of products, Olga Bobbi and Company, which she officially started in 2014.

"It's kind of funny. My whole interest started with my daughter's eczema. The whole business was started to help pay for college," DePrest said.

Shannon is a senior in high school. Most of the products in the Olga Bobbi line are vegan, although some contain beeswax or yogurt powder.

"I just try to stay true to what's important to me and hope other people have the same interest, which they seem to. Probably for the past

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18 years, I've eaten organic. To me, what I put on my skin is just as important as what I eat. That's always been a concern as well," DePrest added.

She grows many of the herbs for her products in the organic garden she has with her husband, television meteorologist Bruce DePrest. Before the frost, they harvested a number of herbs and vegetables.

Bruce made sauce while Cheryl dried a number of herbs to use in products in the coming months. Often, the herbs themselves will inspire new products.

"Sage is a new one. I was out there looking at the sage and it smells so good. I thought, 'What can I do with that?'" she said.

She combined it with citrus for a new soap.

"From the herbs and the oils, the aromatherapy part, it's almost an extension of cooking for me, coming up with new recipes," she added.

The line features a number of soaps, as well as moisturizers, lip

balms and other products. She continually works to add new scents, as well as adding products to the line.

quick because I want to see how it's going to affect my skin over time," she said.



Courtesy photo

The Olga Bobbi line is named for her husband Bruce DePrest's mother, who died in October 2014. Each soap is stamped with her name.

"Right now, I'm working on doing face masks. I've been doing it for five months. Nothing is that

"It's not mix, mix, here you go. There are always different containers around of things we're trying. I don't

have a date for the masks, but it's definitely going to happen."

She's also experimenting with body scrubs and a facial serum.

"I'm sticking with the general group of products and expanding on them. They're things I'm finding I need at my age," she said with a chuckle. "I'm finding with my age, there are certain things I require."

Beyond how the products feel and smell, DePrest wants people to think more about the types of products they're using.

"I just want to make people aware of what is in their products. Be aware of what you're buying, whether it's my soaps or my products or anything on the market. People are drawn into the aesthetic of a thing, a smell, but they're not aware of what they're buying," she said.

"Take a fragrance, let's say lavender. That can consist of 200 to 600 different synthetic scents to equal that. They can be known carcinogens. The FDA does not require fragrance manufacturers to disclose

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what is in their ingredients. They don't have to say what the ingredients are. They can have known carcinogens in their fragrance and they're protected.

"To me, that's really scary. They can say 'fragrance' and they don't have to tell you what it is. I want to know what is on my skin," she added.

"Things like colors, mica, ultramarines, that's not natural. I know they're beautiful colors, but that's not necessarily good for the skin. People need to be aware what's going on their skin and into their body through their skin," DePrest continued.

"I don't put anything synthetic in my products. I think that's really important. I'm concerned about that."

That doesn't mean she doesn't think about the aesthetics of her products.

"I want them to be pretty, but not to the exclusion of my health," she said. "Whether it's shampoo, soap or cream, just read the labels."

She donates a percentage of the sales of her Bliss soap to Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

"Bliss is great for dry skin, making it perfect for people going through radiation. I know several people that have gone through treatment for cancer, that's why I have

chosen [Komen] as my charity."

DePrest uses her whole house to make the products.

"I make the soap in my basement. Upstairs, I have an office with shelving. Once the soap is made, I cut it and it has to sit for eight weeks to cure," she said.

"Most of the water evaporates at that time and it hardens it. The harder it gets, the longer it lasts. Then, I cut it in the kitchen. I pack all my orders upstairs."

Some of the products have distinctive smells and her husband said that some of his colleagues at WFSB recognize the scents that sometimes permeate his clothes. The company is named for his mother, who died on Oct. 13, 2014.

"She was thrilled. She started crying [when we told her]. We wanted something catchy and quirky. We always called her Olga Bobbi. I thought, 'That's so perfect.' I stamp every bar of my soap [with her name]. After she passed away, it makes me smile every time I stamp my soaps," Cheryl said.

"She's smiling down on us right now. My sister was tickled to death we did that. It's a very happy thing for us. Because it's named for her, she lives on," added Bruce.

He noted that even as his mother was in her 90s in assisted living,

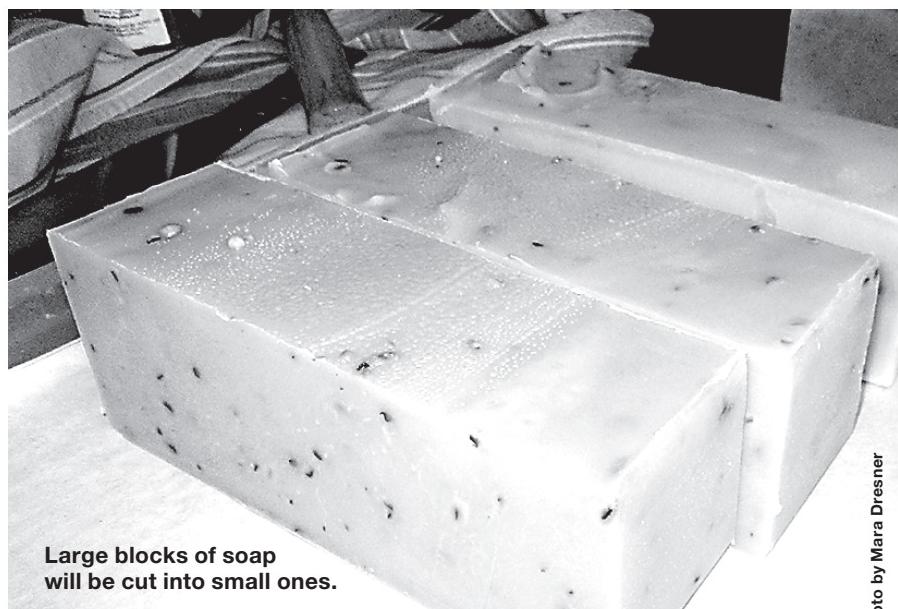


Photo by Mara Dresner

Large blocks of soap will be cut into small ones.

she used Cheryl's products.

Olga Bobbi products are available online, as well as in a number of specialty stores including Daybreak Coffee Roasters in Glastonbury, Old Wethersfield Country Store and Nectar de la Vida in Warren, R.I. She is hoping to expand her wholesale accounts.

"I try to stick with people who have my same philosophy," Cheryl said, noting that she buys organic coffee at Daybreak.

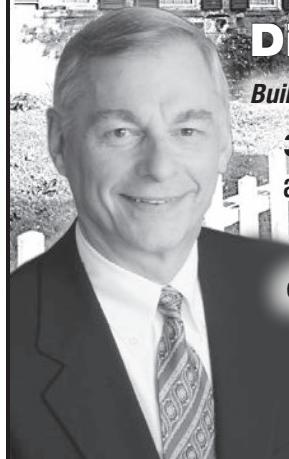
"I like that Olga Bobbi's products are all natural, no chemicals or dyes. She has many types of products suitable for all different skin types. They

fit into [the] OWCS concept in the aspect that we support local and try to carry talented Connecticut producers whenever we can," said Megan Kirk, co-owner, Old Wethersfield Country Store.

"We also like that she has something for everyone in her skin line. We try to embody that in our shop. My personal favorite is the body oil in the winter. It's great for winter, dry skin and around my eyes. The lavender chamomile soap is wonderful. It relaxes me after a long day at the shop."

"I like to meet the people who purchase my products and talk to

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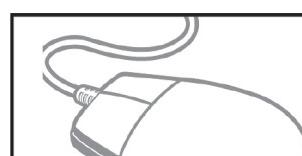
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"I don't put anything synthetic in my products. I think that's really important."

- Cheryl DePrest

them, for them to actually touch the products and smell [them]," she said.

She also has a blog and a newsletter, which might feature everything from making your own toner, homemade facials or a seasonal recipe, as well as discounts.

"It's whatever I'm thinking about at the time," she said.

Something that is always on her mind is getting the word out about what's in the products people use.

"My stepson is in a rock band. When they come through Connecticut, they stop in," said DePrest of the band members who range in age from 18 to 40.

"They always say, 'Hey, can we get some soap?' They all leave with their little bags of Olga Bobbi. They really are knowledgeable about what's in the product. It makes me excited to see.

"My stepsons, one just turned 30, the other's 27, they're very interested and concerned about what's in their body. My daughter automatically picks up a product and turns it over. I feel I've done my job. She's a label reader. Stuff like that makes me happy."

DePrest tries to price her items to be affordable. Soaps sell for \$6 each, with lip balms at \$4.

"My tag line is, 'Be good to your skin every day.' To me, it's not a luxury product. You just need to take care of your skin." WL

Learn more at olgabobbi.com.

Letters Policy

LIFE welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. Letters may be sent via traditional mail or e-mail. A full name and street address are required for publication. Please include your telephone number for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 300 words, and are subject to editing for accuracy, clarity, spelling, grammar, brevity and taste.

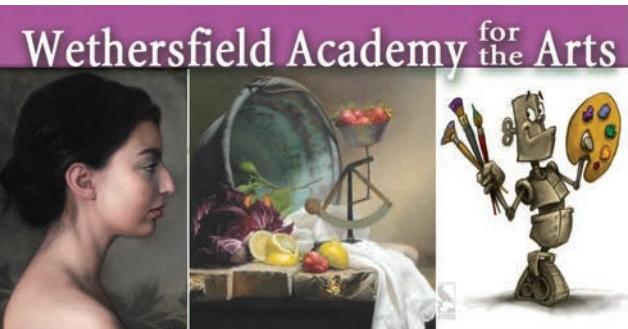
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People notes



1. Jennifer Lynn Filipiak and **Michael George Hartman** were married June 6 at Amarante's Sea Cliff in New Haven. The bride is the daughter of Ronald and Linda Filipiak of Wethersfield. The groom is the son of Robert and Mary Ellen Hartman of Cranston, R.I. Maids of honor were Jennifer Hartman and Allison Hartman, sisters of the groom. Bridesmaids were Kate Abate, Kim Birchard, Alona Bottaglio, Amanda Cobb, Katie Gingras and Julia Moran. Best man was Stephen Hartman, brother of the groom. Groomsmen were David Filipiak, brother of the bride; Jed Giguere, Steve Kohm, Nick Lipeika, Shane McCarron, Chris Neeham and Zack Wicks.

The couple honeymooned in Aruba. The bride is a registered occupational therapist at Long Ridge Post Acute Care skilled nursing facility in Stamford. The groom is a senior accountant at Ernst and Young in Stamford. The couple resides in Norwalk.

2. Pauline and Dominick Severino of Wethersfield and Brooksville, Florida, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary. They were married Nov. 23, 1950, at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II. The couple has five children, 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.



3. Linda Massaro was appointed associate vice president and campaign director at Quinnipiac University.

Helen Neti and Deniz Camli-Saunders earned high honors for the first marking period at the University High School of Science and Engineering, an all-honors STEM and Early College Model Magnet School on the University of Hartford campus. **Raegan Light, Alenies Rodriguez and Ryan Martinez** earned honors. **Erinda Kaso** was named associate of the quarter at the Wethersfield Shopping Center location of Panera Bread.



Courtney Cudmore graduated from the Capital Community College paramedic program. She is a member of the Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance Association and the Capital Region Medical Reserve Corps.

Samantha Margiotta and Kelsey Sullivan are participating in service learning during the fall semester at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Kristin O'Connor was initiated into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. O'Connor was initiated at MCPHS University. **WL**

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Ray is a 1-year-old male hound mix. He would fare best in a single-family home or condominium. Ray does not like cats and has no prior experience living with other dogs. He is sweet and friendly but also has a lot of energy and needs daily exercise. A family with prior general dog experience is the best fit for him. Obedience training is required as part of Ray's adoption plan.

Carlie is a gentle and loving feline who is 4 years old. A domestic middle hair with tiger and white markings, she prefers older children and teenagers and can cope with other animals in the home, as long as they are calm.

Inquiries about adoption may be made at the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington. Call 860-594-4500. More information, including videos, can be found online at cthumane.org. Click on "Adopt" and "Newington." The Connecticut Humane Society is a private organization and has no time limits for adoption. **WL**

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860.563.3510

News roundup

Fire damages house on Brimfield Road

The Wethersfield Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched to a house fire at 362 Brimfield Road the evening of Nov. 18. The first units to arrive just three minutes after the emergency call was received found heavy fire coming out of several windows of the single-story ranch home.

They quickly confirmed reports that an adult male was still inside the home. Firefighters entered the burning structure and found an unconscious man on the living room floor.

The man, later identified as Keron Larkin, was rushed to a waiting ambulance and taken to the hospital for treatment of injuries sustained in the fire, according to Capt. James Ritter, WVFD public information officer.

Mutual aid was summoned from Rocky Hill, Newington and Glastonbury. The fire was declared under control one hour and 18 minutes after the firefighters arrived. Larkin, a longtime resident and former Wethersfield firefighter, died a few days later.

Trotting for turkeys

The CREC Discovery Academy in Wethersfield held its first Turkey Trot Nov. 17. Students collected



non-perishable food items for the Mercy Shelter and Housing Corporation in Hartford and "trotted" on the school's nature trails.

Rotary, bank raise almost \$1,000

The Wethersfield/Rocky Hill Rotary Club raised \$997 as part of the annual Liberty Bank/Rotary Club Thanksgiving Dinner Drive. The club and

Liberty Bank branches in Wethersfield raised \$798 and received matching funds of \$199 from the Liberty Bank Foundation, for a grand total of \$997. The funds were donated to Rocky Hill Human Services and Wethersfield Youth & Social Services.

Thirty-four Rotary clubs and the East Haddam Lions Club teamed up with 48 Liberty Bank branches to raise \$213,965 during the weeks after



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CREC Discovery Academy Jamie's Run

Columbus Day. At the end of the drive, the Liberty Bank Foundation added 25 cents for each dollar raised, resulting in a grand total of \$267,456.

School supports charity

Staff from the CREC Discovery Academy, which opened in September on Cumberland Avenue, recently participated in Jamie's Run to support its new neighbors and a worthwhile cause. Jamie's Run is an annual 5K race that honors the memory of Jamie Lynne Knotts, a Wethersfield resident, and supports the search for a cure

to pediatric cancers.

The magnet school moved to town from two prior temporary locations in Hartford. It currently serves students in preschool through fourth grade and will expand to include fifth grade classes next academic year.

Church hosts blood drive

The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive Dec. 28 at CenterPoint Community Church, 840 Silas Deane Highway. To schedule an appointment call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767), go online at redcrossblood.org, or contact Pastor

Chris Skowronek at 860-571-8415.

Walk-ins are welcome. The blood drive's hours are from 11 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Play features local man

"A Tale Of Two Clones: Episodes 2-6," will be performed at 8 p.m. Dec. 11 and 12 at the Carriage House Theater in Hartford. Tickets are \$10. The play is written, directed by, produced by and stars Matt Saccullo of Wethersfield as Darth Vader.

"A Tale of 2 Clones: Episodes 2-6" is the untold story of two clones and their effects on the "Star

Wars" universe. This show is designed for "Star Wars" fans and those who never saw the movies, but love comedy. It may not be suitable for children under 8. Tickets can be bought online at artful.ly/store/events/7538.

Cops support Special Olympics

Officers of the Wethersfield Police Department will wait on tables Dec. 18 at Chip's Family Restaurant, 1301 Silas Deane Highway, to raise money for Special Olympics. Tip-a-Cop runs from 8 a.m. to noon that day. **WL**

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January calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

9**Second Saturday**

Cinema: "White Heat," 1:30 p.m., Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

150 Prospect Coffeehouse, 6:30 p.m., Wethersfield United Methodist Church, 150 Prospect St., 860-614-5158 or tanjam@comcast.net

19**Tuesday Night**

Movie: "Jurassic World," 6:15 p.m., Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

20**eBooks @ the**

Library, 10:30 a.m., registration recommended, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

Computer Basics, 2:30 p.m., registration required, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

eBooks @ the Library, 6:30 p.m., registration recommended, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

25**Introduction**

to the Internet, 2:30 p.m., registration required, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

26**GFWC**

Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club, 6 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., Newington, 860-666-4371

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

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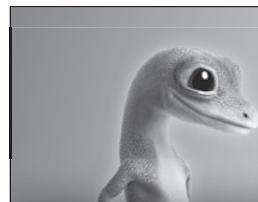


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Chamber networking



Among the attendees were, from left, Judy Keane of the town Economic Development and Improvement Commission, Executive Director Amy Northrop Wittorff of the Wethersfield Historical Society and Sheila Hennessey, president of its governing board.



photos by Mark Jahne

Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce members gathered at the recently opened Kathy's Urgent Care on the Silas Deane Highway Nov. 12 for a Business After Hours networking event. Hosts Dr. Thomas Brown, owner and primary practitioner, and Medical Assistant Analy Martinez were on hand to welcome them.

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Holiday LIFE

Your thoughts:



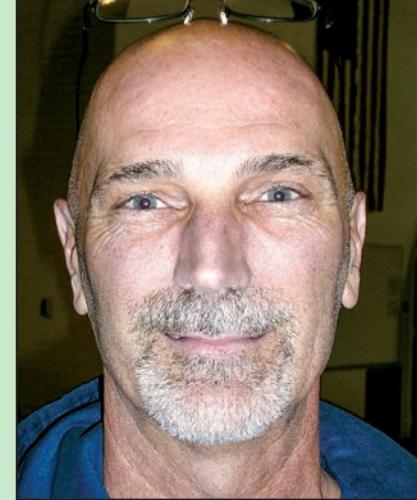
"I love spending time with family. Traditions."
– Stacy Veley



"Family."
– Chris Lamberti



"I like family, traditions, and lots of decoration."
– Annette Dunn



"I like the festivities, being with family and friends, the excitement of it all."
– Jaye Veley

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Holiday LIFE

Events spotlight

Night of Joy Christmas Concert

Dec. 11-13

Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church

511 Maple St.

860-563-8286

This year's concert features many of the church's best in-house musicians including soloists, the WEFC band, adult and children's choirs. Music is performed in a variety of styles from pop to gospel, classical to jazz, and includes familiar carols as well as newer songs of the season. Concert times are 7 p.m. Friday, 4 and 7 p.m. Saturday and 4 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free, but tickets are required, as space is limited.

Annual Worship Service

Dec. 12, 3 p.m.

Griswoldville Chapel

176 Griswold Road

860-529-0900

This historic 1872 chapel hosts its annual Christmas season worship gathering. This will be a short, traditional service followed by coffee, sweets and a sign-along. The chapel is available for rent for weddings, parties and meetings and was originally built because people in Griswoldville wanted a place to worship closer to home than the Congregational church in Old Wethersfield.

Community Carol Sing

Dec. 24, 5 p.m.

First Church of Christ in Wethersfield

250 Main St.

860-529-1575 or firstchurch.org

This community carol sing will feature song books, candles and hot chocolate, as well as brass accompaniment. Four candlelight services will be offered in the 1761 meetinghouse at 6:30, 8, 9:30, and 11 p.m. Each service features Christmas music, and carols sung by all, along with a message from Senior Minister Deryk Richenburg entitled "Movin' On Up." Child care is available during the 6:30 service for ages 5 and younger. Children age 5 through grade 3 are invited to a "Happy Birthday, Jesus" party at 6:30 p.m. while their parents are worshiping in the meetinghouse.

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Holiday LIFE

Unwrapped

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For the kids

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For her

Looking for a special gift for that special woman in your life? Items available at Westfarms include an 18k rose gold bow cuff at Tiffany & Co. for \$7,500, COACH shearling wristlets available for \$65 at Macy's, a \$228 Cowled Cashmere Tunic at Anthropologie and a Limited Edition Costello Hydration Essentials Set for \$29 at Kiehl's Since 1851.



For him

Gifts available at Westfarms to say "Happy Holidays" to your favorite guy include a Lucky Brand horizontal cable shawl for \$149, a Seiko Coutura watch for \$495 at Lord & Taylor and the Fitbit Surge for \$249 at the AT&T Experience Store.



Holiday LIFE

Holidays made easy

How to maintain a festive spirit throughout the season

by Alison Jalbert and Nancy Thompson
LIFE staff

The holiday season is filled with festive imagery – sparkling snow, presents wrapped with beautiful bows, a twinkling Christmas tree adorned with ornaments and family gathered around a crackling fire sipping cocoa.

Whether or not that imagery is true to life is questionable, as the holidays often incite stress as everyone tries to attempt that ideal depicted in commercials and movies. Banish stress and chaos to the naughty list this year with tips from area experts on

how to make the holidays more relaxing and enjoyable.

Stuff the stockings with care

What's not to like about an oversized stocking full of goodies? Emmy Lou DeBari, owner of Emmy Lou's Ltd. in Glastonbury, offered some ideas of stocking stuffers for anyone on your gift list.

Personal care items, such as hand creams made



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Holiday LIFE

in New England and body wash and lotions, are available in small sizes that fit nicely in stockings and meet airport security requirements. Soy candles can add a delightful scent to a home and are available in several varieties, including coconut-lime, pure lavender and vanilla.

Small bottles of hand lotion in almond-pear and pomegranate scents will have hands feeling and smelling like they've been to the manicurist, and French-milled heart-shaped soaps will turn any bath or shower into a spa.

Handy gadgets are popular as well. Small light-up pillboxes are great for use in restaurants, theaters and other places with dim lighting, and a wrist key-keeper combines the look of a bracelet with the utility of never again having to search for those keys. Armored wallets are small enough to fit easily into a purse or pocket, hold cards and cash, and protect cards from radio frequency identity theft.

One of DeBari's favorite items is an LED flashlight that's flat and fits anywhere.

Ornaments geared to a specific interest, such as bicycling, snowmobiling or sports,

or an event such as a first Christmas, not only decorate a family tree, but also turn into treasured keepsakes. Holiday-themed socks in red and green with Santa, mistletoe and other designs are another option.

Not all stocking stuffers need to come from a store. DeBari also suggested adding homemade cookies or fudge to a stocking for a personal touch.

Quick ways to make your home feel festive

It's easy to spend a lot of time and money on holiday decorations. For simple and affordable ways to make a home festive, Farah Assi Evenson, owner of Interiors by Farah in Wethersfield, offered several quick and easy ideas.

First, the wreath.

"Who can say holidays without saying wreath?" Evenson said. "A lot of people associate a wreath with fall and winter, but it actually can be used any time of the year. If you start with a basic wreath you can embellish it depending on the season."

For example, dress it up with pinecones, berries and ornaments for Christmas, or flowers or seashells for



summer. Wreaths not only look good on the outside of your house, but will also look great hanging inside. Next is the centerpiece, another decorative item that can be changed and used all year.

"For an attractive centerpiece, gather different size jars along with vases and fill them with faux greenery and berries in the winter," she said. "Just like a wreath, they complement any holiday decor. Depending on the season, you can fill them with many different things. I like to fill mine with lemons or seashells in the summer."

How about those pillows? "One of my favorite easy ways to add holiday flair is to change all the throw pillows in my house," Evenson said. "Whether it's the pillows on the living room couch or the pillows in the guest bedroom, it always makes the house look more festive. Throw pillows can go a long way and can be interchanged depending on the season. I have a few bags of them in my attic labeled for each holiday – deep reds and greens for December, blues and soft white for summer."

And finally, for coziness and warmth, how about cinnamon?

"Holidays are also the time to feel cozy and warm," she said. "Nothing does that better than the smell of cinnamon. Fill vases with scented pinecones and place them around the house. They don't have to be visible, but their scent alone will fill the house with a welcoming holiday feel."

Wrap it up

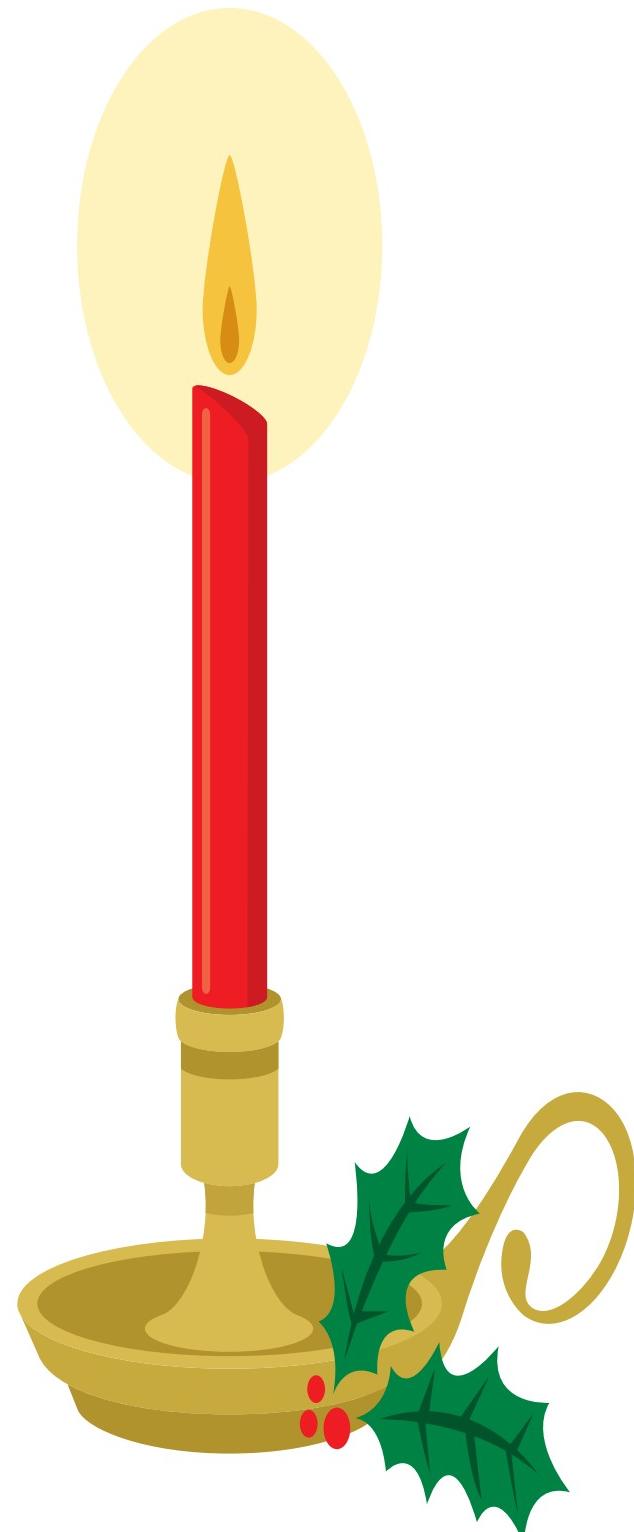
Gift wrapping seems so simple; cover a geometrically shaped present in eye-catching wrapping paper, tie a brightly colored ribbon around it and make a jaunty bow. Easy, right? Maybe, if you're Martha Stewart. Corners end up lumpy, bows lie limp and the whole presentation looks ... off. Alison Swayne, sales associate at The Silver Dahlia in Simsbury, which also has locations in West Hartford and Glastonbury, said time is necessary.

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Holiday LIFE

[is important]. Making a gift look nice is part of gift giving. It's worth it," she said.

To expedite the process, she said pre-cut paper could be helpful if many gifts are the same size, and stick-on bows can look just as pretty as handcrafted bows, with much less effort.

Purchasing quality paper is important, as it's easier to wrap with good paper as opposed to a flimsier option, according to Deb Clark, key holder at Gift-ology in Blue Back Square in West Hartford.

Leon Davidoff, co-owner of The Paper Station in Newington, said there is a secret to successful wrapping. When wrapping a package – he used a shirt box as an example – all edges of the paper need to make a crease at the edge of the box.

"That will hold it there," he

explained. "When you go to do the sides, do the same thing on every single side."

For those who are truly gift wrap averse, there are gift bags available in many sizes and designs.

Jillian Skau, an associate at SPIN Monograms & Gifts in West Hartford, said gift bags are easy and reusable.

Davidoff also has a secret to proper tissue paper placement in gift bags. Taking the piece, pull down from the center, like you are making a bouquet. Doing this with two or three sheets of tissue paper will get "that poof look."

"Everyone always enjoys a properly festive gift bag," he said.

Surviving holiday stress

Stress is often synonymous with the holidays, but Dr. Laura Saunders, a

psychologist at Hartford Hospital's Institute of Living, said the first step is to set reasonable expectations for oneself.

"Oftentimes, stress is caused by the fact that our goals are too high or our expectations are unreasonable," she explained. "Therefore, we feel like we fall short of those expectations. Be kind to oneself and be reasonable."

It is also important to remember that families are often flawed.

"A lot of individuals don't have picture-perfect families," Saunders said. "It's OK to have families that have issues. Facebook and the media are overcompensation. Don't feel bad about your family dynamic."

When it comes to gift giving, the emphasis should be on quality, not quantity.

She said the greatest gift a

person can give their children or nieces and nephews is an experience.

"Time and attention can be the greatest gift; it doesn't have to be the most expensive one."

Saunders said parents need to remember that bringing them to many different parties throws them off their daily routine.

Keeping them on regular bedtime schedules and being careful about sugar intake will make things less stressful for everyone involved.

Too many parties and other social obligations can also be detrimental to adults; Saunders said they can have a negative impact on a person's ability to function at work and with their family.

"Be gentle with oneself and make sure you're not overreaching," she said. **WL**

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Holiday LIFE



From the heart
There is still time to make
your own holiday gifts

by Sloan Brewster
and Alicia B. Smith
LIFE staff

When getting ready to hang stockings by the chimney with care this year, why not make your own stockings?

Homemade gifts do not have to be intimidating and are a unique way to show friends and family how much you care.

Marion Carling, owner of Village Wool in Glastonbury, assured there was plenty of time to make a knitted or crocheted gift.

This year, many of her customers are coming in to make infinity scarves, towels and fingerless mittens, while a few are sticking

with traditional mittens.

"There are things out there that are very simple," Carling said.

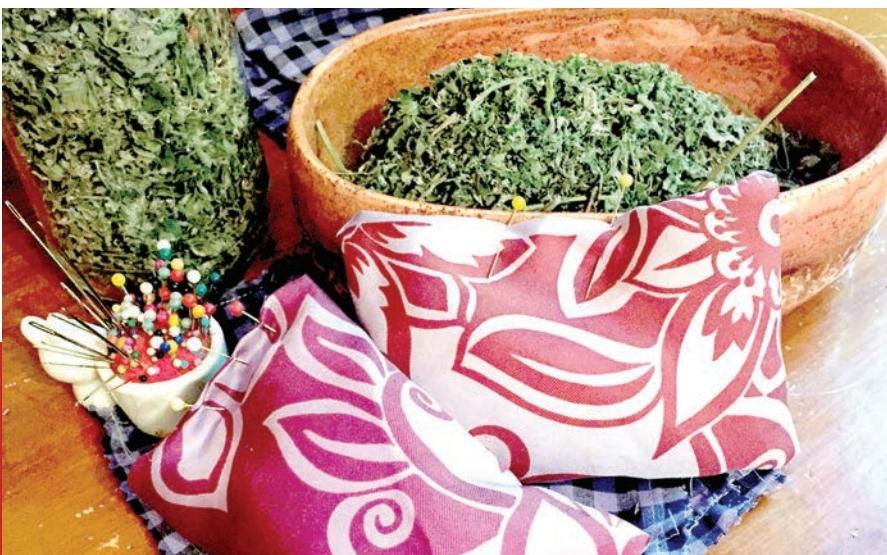
For those who have never knitted before or perhaps it's been awhile, Carling said knitting is a skill that needs to be learned.

"It's not something that you can automatically pick up," she said.

Her shop does offer a weekly-drop in knitting session Thursday evenings where newbies may be able to learn some tips and get started.

For those whose needle skills may be rusty, there are simple projects, like the aforementioned infinity scarves or a regular scarf, which Carling said is basically a long rectangle.

Holiday LIFE



Above, left: A handmade gift by Grace Epstein. She made catnip pillows with catnip that grows on the The Ethel Walker School campus. Above, right: Kemi Oluwakemi Richards, a student at Ethel Walker School in Simsbury, places her hands beside a hat she knitted as a gift.

"People who are not knitters can pick up projects like that," she said.

Carling has several customers who get busy this time of year because they are making homemade knitted gifts for their loved ones. She said hats and even Christmas stockings are popular gifts.

"I really think it's more personal,"

she said of the homemade option. "It just shows more thoughtfulness; you are thinking about what someone would want. Also, it's enjoyable to make. Usually, people do it because they enjoy knitting and crocheting. For them, it's a sort of creative expression, and they are able to make a nice gift for someone."

For those interested in knitting one, purling twice, but are not sure of what to make, Carling stocks several magazines in her shop that are specifically for gift making.

The Claypen in West Hartford is another great alternative for making a unique gift for a friend this holiday season. The walk-in studio carries a

wide selection of gift ideas that can easily be personalized – coffee mugs, picture frames, platters and more – that guests can choose and paint for themselves.

There is no need to worry about whether or not artistic skills are in abundance; the staff can help and they also offer a number of stencils

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Holiday LIFE

and tape for straight lines to assist those who are less confident about free styling with a paintbrush.

In addition, patrons can try their hand at glass fusion, another creative option, where guests begin with a glass base, arrange colorful glass on top of the piece before it's put in the kiln to fuse, and later it returns to the kiln to be shaped into a bowl or any number of other items.

"This time of year is our busiest," Stephanie Yearsley, store manager, said. "People want to come in and create something useful for someone."

A popular gift item at the studio is taking handprints or footprints of children to be given as a gift for grandparents.

Yearsley said at least half of the studio customers come in to make an item for someone else.

"That is more tangible. You have to use your imagination," she said of painting an item. "We love so much being a part of people's memories and gift giving, it's true. We see people come in and really put themselves into it. It's personal. They are keepsakes; they are memories."

Christmas does not take a break for many customers of Thistle Needleworks in Wethersfield.

Owner Judi Solomon said many of her customers are in gift making mode all year long.

"There is satisfaction in putting a little love into everything you are doing – you are thinking about that person as you are making it," she said.

The shop offers a number of classes, and one of her students told her she was making a gift for her pending great-grandchild and said the project was something she could do from her hands and heart.

Among the gift items to select from are wall hangings, pillows, ornaments, Christmas stockings, bracelets and cuffs, purses and wallets, boxes, trays and mirrors.

She has been doing needlework since she was a child and assured that anyone can pick it up or take a refresher class.

Lilah Kelly, a student at Simsbury's The Ethel Walker School and a resident of Rocky Hill, prefers to make gifts.

"I don't really like buying

things," she said. "I feel like I put more of myself into it when I make them. I know that sounds really cheesy, but it feels like it's more from me than from a store."

This year, she is embarking on a new project she discovered on Pinterest for her parents' gift.

"I'm making sort of like a folded book sculpture. The word 'joy' is being folded into it," she said.

With each calculated fold, she will transform the pages inside the book until the folded pages form the word.

As of Nov. 1, the endeavor, which was doubling as an art project, was not yet completed and was taking a little longer than Kelly anticipated. At that point, she had been working on it for about two months in art class and devoting about an hour to it each weekend.

Gift making projects she has completed in the past include pot-holders, friendship bracelets, sewn pillows and Christmas ornaments.

Grace Epstein, a Simsbury resident, art teacher at Ethel Walker and Canton Art League member, is also big on making gifts.

She especially enjoys showing up at the holidays with a basket of unwrapped handmade treasures and telling family members to choose what they like.

"It usually is something kind of fanciful," she said. "It gives them the opportunity to pick what they want."

While some of her projects are artsy, such as sculpting ceramic mugs and firing them up in her kiln or one at the school, she has also made simpler creations.

She's done knitting, making hats and such, and likes making catnip pillows, using catnip, which grows all over campus.

"It's just a simple little thing," she said. "It's a good product." **WL**

Village Wool is located at 2279 Main St., Glastonbury. For more information, call 860-633-0898. The Claypen is at 997 Farmington Ave., West Hartford. For more information, call 860-233-3322 or visit theclaypen.com. Thistle Needleworks can be found at 506 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield. For more information, call 860-257-2718 or visit thistleneedleworks.com.

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High-tech medicine

These doctors deal with ills of the neck, nose, head, ears and throat

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Connecticut Ear, Nose & Throat Associates recently opened at 988 Silas Deane Highway. The new location will offer patients the same services as before, but closer to home.

The office offers state-of-the-art technology and equipment to provide otolaryngology care, including testing and treatment for imbalance and dizziness, the latest in-office procedures for the treatment of sinus disease and advanced video imaging for the diagnosis of various disorders.

The space also houses the new Connecticut Hearing Center, which facilitates a comprehensive medical approach to hearing loss, hearing evaluations and hearing aid fittings, among other services. The focus is a patient-centric and team approach to care.

This office mostly replaces what had been the practice's main clinic at 85 Seymour St., near Hartford Hospital, with which it has an affiliation. The CTENT physicians perform their surgeries at that hospital.

"We initially had an office down the street [in Wethersfield], a small satellite office," Dr. Carl Moeller said.

He is board certified in otolaryngology and specializes in head and neck surgery. Moeller said the practice wanted to move its main clinic to Wethersfield because the town offers easy access and a good patient base. Free parking is also a plus. They are already seeing growth in patient numbers.

"I had been going around with an agent looking at other spaces in Wethersfield," CEO Toni Robinson said.

It was Moeller who found the vacant space at 988 Silas Deane. As soon as she saw it,



Toni Robinson and Dr. Carl Moeller are the leaders of Connecticut Ear, Nose & Throat Associates, which recently relocated its primary clinic from Hartford to 988 Silas Deane Highway.

Robinson knew it was the right fit.

"July 31 was our first day," she said.

The first few months were a soft opening. Grand opening ceremonies were held in November.

"There are seven doctors within our group, and five of the seven come to this location," Moeller said. "Most of us spend 60 to 70 percent of our time in the office and the rest in the operating room. ... We treat a lot of sinus disorders, ear disorders. Our volume has picked up since opening this office."

They also treat sleep apnea, neck cancer, thyroid issues, allergies, dizziness, snoring and what he called voice disturbance, or speech problems. In addition to Wethersfield and Hartford, CTENT can also be found in Avon, Enfield, Farmington, Glastonbury, South Windsor and West Hartford.

The practice employs four

audiologists who help patients deal with hearing loss and other ear disorders, as well as selecting the latest in hearing aids.

"Now, hearing aids link to your personal technology," Robinson said.

Moeller said the practice uses cutting-edge technology to treat both children and adults. Computer towers allow them to use camera equipment such as a flexible laryngoscope to see inside the patient's vocal chords and sinus passages.

"The patient can be looking at an iPad or tablet that allows them to see what the physician is looking at," he said.

Although audiology services are no longer offered at the former Hartford office location, physicians continue to treat patients at 85 Seymour St., Suite 318. **WL**

For more information about Connecticut Ear, Nose & Throat Associates or the Connecticut Hearing Centers call 860-493-1950 or visit ctent.net.



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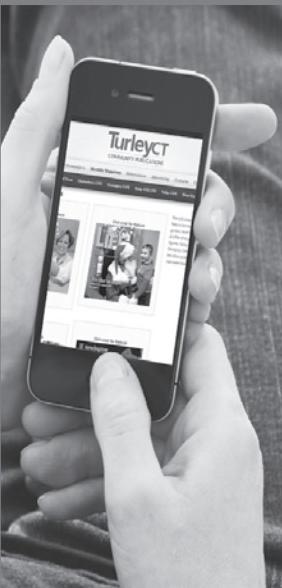
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Magnet school opens

CREC Discovery Academy promotes STEM education and parent choice

The CREC Discovery Academy opened this fall for grades pre-kindergarten through five with an emphasis on STEM. It is among a growing number of regional magnet schools run by the Capital Region Education Council and the first to be located in Wethersfield.

STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – is currently a major focus in both public and private schools. The concept is to enable students to develop strong foundational knowledge in these core subjects.

Students learn by gathering and using information and solve problems by employing scientific ways of thinking and technology as their tools.

The school is located at 176 Cumberland Ave. in the north end of town. CREC took over and extensively renovated an abandoned building that for

many years was part of the Northeast Utilities, now Eversource Energy, network.

While the location is new, the school is not.

"This is our fifth year. We started in 2001 on Franklin Avenue in Hartford," Principal Lynn Toper said.

The first year had only two levels, kindergarten and pre-kindergarten. Following the CREC model, one additional level is added each year until a school arrives at its designated configuration. In addition to Franklin Avenue, she had students in the historic Colt Manufacturing building in Hartford.

"What CREC does with its schools is open them in temporary locations. This year, the Aerospace and Engineering School opened as well," Amanda Falcone, communications specialist for CREC, said.

The Aerospace and Engineering School is located

by Mark Jahne
Editor

in Windsor and serves grades six-12.

Toper pointed out that the Cumberland Avenue building was empty for a long time before CREC acquired it. There were previously two buildings on the site; one was remodeled and the other razed.

"It was gutted. We went down to the studs," she said. "We had a webcam so all our families could watch the progression."

"Everything was ready at the start of the school year," Falcone added.

When the Discovery Academy first opened, it was the 15th magnet school in the Hartford area operated by CREC. Now, there are 18. Additional magnets are operated by the Hartford Public Schools.

The Discovery Academy uses a variety of teaching methods and instructional strategies to emphasize



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EDUCATION

thematic, inquiry-based and discovery learning. The 5E Instructional Model – engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate – helps students build their own understanding from experiences and ideas.

Once it reaches full capacity, the school will house 435 students; there are 405 enrolled this academic year. Two science labs, a literacy room, art and music, a robotics room and a computer lab augment the core classrooms.

"Children are naturally inquisitive about the world around them," Toper said. "Every child has a question in their mind and that's going to drive them. This model allows a lot of project-based learning. We really try to foster a lot of independence in our children."

The site's nature trails, discovery



areas and planting beds provide an outdoor element to

education. There are two full-size soccer fields and a pair of

playscapes as well.

A rooftop garden will become part of the curriculum once the necessary safety measures are completed. A large room on the first of three floors serves as a cafeteria and auditorium. Nearby is a full gymnasium.

Teachers set up problems and monitor student exploration, promoting new patterns of thinking. Students learn to solve problems by thinking creatively and critically.

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The Discovery Academy collaborates with community partners including the Connecticut Science Center, Children's Science Museum and Roaring Brook Nature Center to develop a hands-on, inquiry-based and developmentally appropriate STEM curriculum.

Its special features include opportunities for field studies with those community partners, full-day preschool and kindergarten programming, state-of-the-art classrooms, world language for all students, before- and after-school care, instruction by a well-trained and diverse staff, and a state-of-the-art facility in development.

Students at the Discovery Academy enjoy many opportunities to work collaboratively to solve problems and are taught not to despair if at first they don't succeed because they can learn from their failures. Persevere All the Time Awards are celebrated each month.

Every classroom has a Smartboard, and there is also one

mobile unit available to teachers. There is a 1:1 child to technology ratio, with every student having his or her own iPad or laptop computer.

Admission to this and all of the other magnet schools run by CREC is through a lottery.

"It's nice that parents can have options," Toper said.

One of her goals is for the school to become an active part of the local community. To launch that initiative, 25 staff members participated in the recent Jamie's Run fundraising event. **WL**

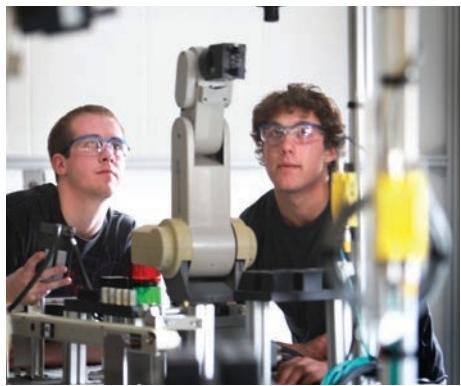
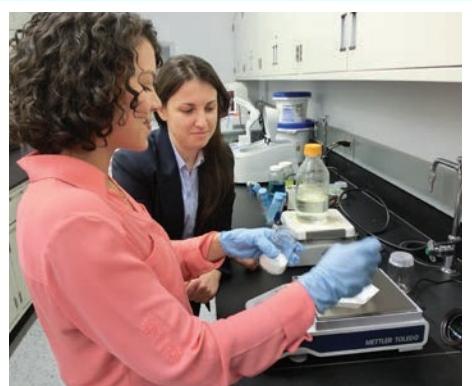
To learn more about the Discovery Academy and other CREC magnet schools, call 860-524-4096 or visit crecschools.org. Parents interested in enrolling their children in the Greater Hartford Regional School Choice lottery to attend a magnet school may apply no later than Jan. 29 at choiceeducation.org/2016-17-rsco-lottery.



Principal Lynn Toper pays a visit to one of the classrooms to chat with a small group of children working together on a project. The paraeducator at the table is Sonya Peters-Bailey.

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in the classroom



Monthly meeting is a Highcrest School tradition

by Mark Jahne
Editor

More than 400 excited children gathered in the auditorium at Highcrest School just prior to Thanksgiving. It was monthly meeting day, an opportunity for the entire school to get together and celebrate education.

Principal John Bean explained that each grade takes a turn running the meeting, and on this day, that honor fell to the second grade. Everyone wanted to see what those students and teachers had to offer.

"They love it, they really do. It's nice to get together as a community

Sixth-graders at Highcrest School donned special shirts and eye paint to prepare for the school's annual Turkey Bowl, held Nov. 20. The Turkey Bowl is a flag football game pitting the sixth grade against the faculty and staff.

once a month," Bean said. "I think it's a great tradition."

Monthly meeting was long in place when he was named principal at the onset of the past academic year. He recognized its popularity and decided to maintain the practice.

Parents and grandparents are welcome to attend these meetings, and some do.

Bean started off the meeting with some introductory remarks. Two second-graders then exchanged a greeting of "good Morrow" to show the school how the Pilgrims said

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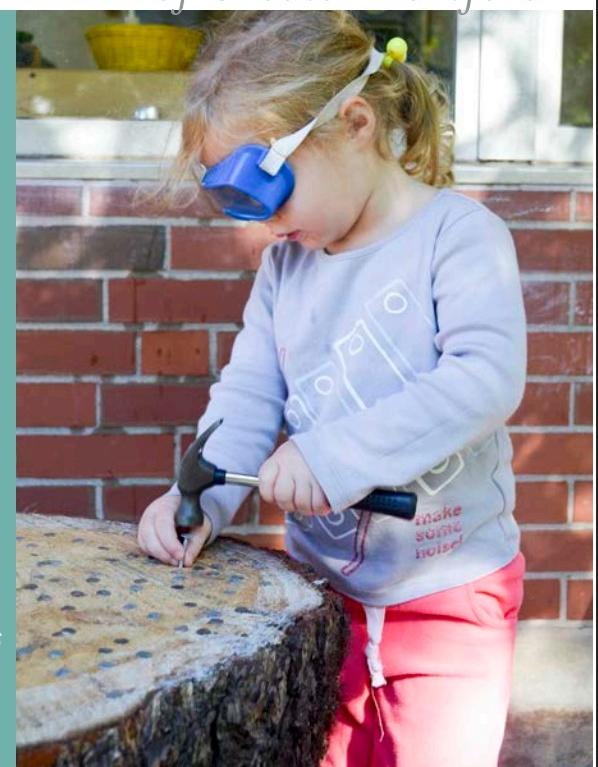
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EDUCATION



An auditorium full of students listens to a program conducted by the various second-grade classes.

hello to each other back in Colonial days.

Classmates read aloud a Thanksgiving poem, and each class of second-graders spoke about blessings for which they are thankful.

Bean used the opportunity to dole out the monthly awards for the Writer's Spotlight. He then highlighted some of the activities taking place in the school, including a gardening project, food drive sponsored by its Daisy and Brownie Scout troops, and a fourth grade-led change drive to raise money for the town's

food bank.

Several of the second-graders stayed after the meeting to talk about the fun they had presenting to the entire school. It became apparent that standing up and speaking in front of hundreds of people did not intimidate them.

"We got to talk in front of the whole school," Jenevive Haggerty said with a smile.

"You get the attention from the entire school," Aiden Sackett added.

Kylie Tardette echoed that sentiment.

"I like that we got to be in front of the whole school," she said.

"I enjoy that the parents are allowed to come," Mollie Engel said.

Norah Bangs commented that she liked her class "getting all the attention."

Rose Witlicki said she was pleased that she was one of the readers who explained why her class is thankful.

Later in the day, sixth-graders

took
on the
faculty and
staff in the annual
Turkey Bowl flag football
game. The adults dressed down
and many of the students wore
athletic gear and painted black
stripes under their eyes, just like
professional football players. **WL**

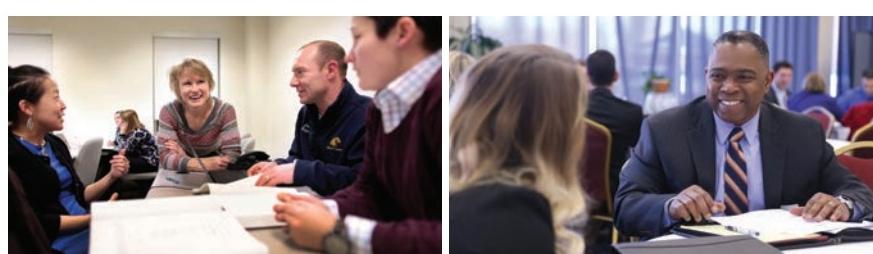


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Slice of LIFE

photos by Lisa Brisson

Feeding the hungry

Hundreds of turkeys and thousands of dollars were collected at D'Esopo Funeral Chapel and the Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance Association in the annual drive to support Foodshare. With a day to spare before its collection deadline, Foodshare officials said they had collected 16,188 birds to meet the requests of families needing a turkey and the fixings, as well as \$500,000 in cash donations. Phil Lombardo, WVAA's chief of service, reported they collected 417 turkeys and one ham.



1. Johnny Collas, 14, smiles as he accepts a donation from Carol Kober-Narciss at the WVAA headquarters. **2.** Members and friends of the Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance Association pose by their turkey mascot. **3.** Boy Scouts from Troop 85, including Thomas Betts, 14, Brian Heavren (dressed as a turkey), 15, and Christopher Heavren, 13, stand by the street waving to cars to stop and leave off a donation. **4.** Rich Sicotte hands off his donation to WVAA volunteer Ayanna Blanco, 14. **5.** At the ambulance headquarters, Morgan Stegmaier and Taylor Simeone, both 15, place donated turkeys in the Foodshare bin. The girls were helping out as community service activities, Morgan for her Confirmation class at Corpus Christi Church and Taylor for her freshman civics class at Wethersfield High School. **6.** The D'Esopo Funeral Chapel was busy throughout the day with old and new friends dropping off donations for Foodshare. Happily accepting those donations are, from left, George D'Esopo, Foodshare President and CEO James Arena-DeRosa, radio personality Brad Davis, Michael and Janet Klett, Ceil D'Esopo and China Doll. **7.** D'Esopo Funeral Chapel's Nick Angelillo marks down yet another turkey donation on the collection bin. **8.** George D'Esopo accepts a \$100 check from Bruce and Pat Crane.

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Editorial

What will the new year bring?

It's hard to believe that Christmas, Hanukkah and the new year are already upon us. Didn't we just celebrate those holidays a few months ago?

Time flies along unless, of course, one is waiting for an airplane, train, high-priority package or check to arrive. Then it drags on as if running in quicksand.

As the holidays approach, they bring with them joy and hope for better times. Everyone looks at the arrival of Jan. 1 as an opportunity to refresh their outlook, make resolutions to improve their lives and hope – maybe even pray – that whatever difficulties befell them this year will not return.

The economy is creeping upward, but it has a long way to go to catch up to the pre-recession days of 2006. Too many people are still looking for work without any luck.

Municipal leaders enter the new year wondering how they will be able to hold the line on taxes without cutting deeply into programs and services that residents want and need. They certainly can't expect any help from state government, not when it is facing an overwhelming budget deficit.

Just how did that happen, anyway? There was a time when the state got by just fine with

the money it had. Then the lottery was created, but over time that extra revenue wasn't enough.

Along came Indian gaming, a huge boost to state coffers. That wasn't enough, either. So a personal state income tax was passed. Surely that would provide more than enough money to fund everything that needed funding.

Guess again. All it did was give state lawmakers more money to play with and they spent it all – and then some. That's something we all may want to remember when they run for new terms in November 2016.

Speaking of elections, next November will finally mark the end of a presidential campaign that has already dragged on much too long.

Will Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton remain the front-runners of the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively? A lot can change between now and November.

But let's not get caught up in political angst. It is the holiday season, after all, a time of love and brotherhood and good cheer that everyone can enjoy regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or any other defining characteristic.

Let's focus on that and enjoy all the season has to offer. We wish all of our readers and advertisers a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and prosperous new year. **WL**

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Snap a photo around town, share it on Instagram, and you might see it in these pages.

Letters to the editor

New school board leader lists her priorities

To the Editor:

As the newly appointed chairperson of the Board of Education, I want to give thanks to all who came out to vote and showed their confidence in our team's message. I also want to give special thanks to my loving and very supportive family for being there for me as I start this next chapter in my educational career.

I was born and raised in Wethersfield by a family that instilled in me that we could live a great life in a small town. It is true – you can have a great life in our small town, but right now we face a challenge. We need to get our education system back to being great again.

There is a clear path to confronting and solving this challenge. In this age of instant and constant communication, the disconnects that exist in our school system are unacceptable and simply must stop.

We are a system of educated and

talented parents, students and teachers. Communication allows everyone to be on the same page and working toward the same goal. As part of that goal, this board will be getting into our schools to see first hand how our schools operate.

We also must address our students' test scores. How can we all be working so hard and investing so many dollars and our test scores be so disappointing?

The board will take a hard look at the curriculum, class size, time spent on testing and teachers' time out of the classroom instead of teaching. When it's not working, and the scores prove it, we must fix it.

Finally, we must constantly be aware of our budget. Our schools are funded by our hard-earned tax dollars. That money will be budgeted and monitored properly.

We can solve these major challenges and the many others that will arise. This board can, and will, use its significant influence to bring about this much-needed change.

I am very aware that as your new board chair, I need to be inclusive, and I intend to do just that. Every member of our board has energy, commitment and intelligence.

I intend to bring my fresh perspective and deep appreciation of all ideas that will make us stronger. Wethersfield wants and needs our cohesive leadership that puts our children first above all else. This board will work as a team and bring us back to great.

– Barbara "Bobbie" Granato

Pleased to see diner open again

To the Editor:

I was very happy to see the article titled "From Empty to Busy" in your October 2015 issue. I think it is great that an iconic business is now re-opened.

Many residents were very saddened when the old Wethersfield Diner closed, as it had been there for so many years, and people went

there on a regular basis. After reading this article, I also think it is excellent that Stacey Pribyson has created an interesting menu for the new Wethersfield Diner, but also one with the traditional breakfast and lunch options that so many people enjoy.

This choice will not only help the business thrive, but it will also help the diner to rebuild its customer base.

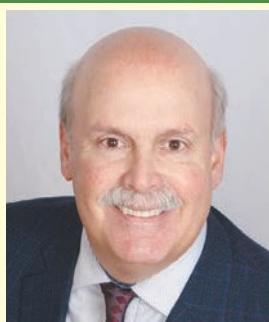
I also think it is admirable that someone decided to purchase and renovate the diner so quickly, as this helps to avoid having a vacant building sitting unused on the Silas Deane Highway. Buildings that are left vacant unfortunately often fall into disrepair and this lack of proper maintenance of the building prevents anyone at all from purchasing them.

I think the new Wethersfield Diner is an excellent business and it is great that the new ownership will be preserving tradition.

– Jacob Skowronek

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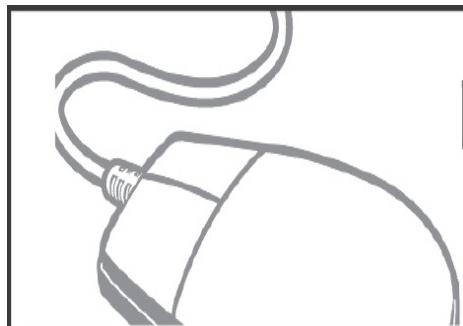
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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]



Averages, and Extremes...

Climatologically speaking, January is the coldest month on record here in Connecticut. However, last year, it was February that made headlines – not only the coldest February since records have been kept, but the coldest of all months!

No matter if it's hot, or cold... dry, or wet...we're always crunching

numbers. It's important to know how the weather we are dealing with compares to the past. It helps us make correlations and to track trends over time.

The term normal can be somewhat misleading, "average" is more appropriate in many cases. When talking about temperatures being "above" or "below" or even when it comes to rain/snow with a "sur-

plus" or "deficit" ...the values we are using as points of reference are based on a mathematical average over a 30 year timespan, typically three consecutive decades.

So, specifically for the month of January... how does the month shape up? On the 1st, the average low is 19 while the average high is 35. By the end of the month, there is not much fluctuation... 18 and

35, respectively. For snow, 12.3 inches is average.

In the realm of extremes, January of 2011 holds the record for snowiest with 54.3 inches. The coldest temperature recorded in the month was 26 degrees below zero, in 1961! On the flipside, the warmest temperature recorded in the 31 day period was 72, in 2007. **WL**

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